

DEVELOPING A MORE MATURE
CONCEPT OF GOD

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FOREWORD

Working among adults in a Christian education setting aroused the realization that there is a struggle to understand the mysteries of the faith. The struggle, itself, indicated a desire for growth, while the concepts struggled with, indicated a desire to understand theological ideas and how to apply them to one's daily life.

The inspiration for this project came from a course in theology taught by Dr. David Griffin at the School of Theology at Claremont. This together with the desire to understand the metaphor "maturity" led to the attempt to develop a more mature concept of God.

Coming from five years spent in serving the church in Fiji, the intellectual stimulus provided by the many professors who have taught me at Claremont has been refreshing. My thanks go to the professors and special thanks to Drs. Allen Moore and David Griffin who served as my committee. The Church School Adult class at the United Methodist Church of West Covina co-operated willingly and for this, I am grateful.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge my debt to my family, to my husband, Bill, who is a constant encouragement, to Bill's parents, and my mother who have supported us in numerous ways, to my sisters Audrey and Joan who

appreciate my purpose and to my children who do not understand fully but who love me just the same.

To my daughter, Meralisa, and to my son, Grant, I dedicate this project.

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ABSTRACT

James Fowler's research in the development of faith suggests that many adults have not attained the level of development of which they are capable. Adults, then, who present themselves for Christian Education have the potential for a more mature understanding of the faith.

As Christians, an understanding of the faith depends upon an understanding of God. Developing a more mature concept of God is basic to reaching a higher stage of faith development.

To develop a more mature concept of God, it was first necessary to establish what "maturity" connoted and then suggest a way of presenting a concept of God which would produce growth.

Allport's criteria for the attributes of maturity were used. The way in which the thought of one philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, demonstrated these attributes in the adult learners.

Maturity is not a stage to be reached but rather a realization of full potential at all stages of adult development. Allowing for the uniqueness of each individual and for differing rates of development, it is still possible to describe predictable stages of development of adults.

Alfred North Whitehead, John B. Cobb, Jr., and David Griffin have set forth concepts of God which take account of scientific ideas and the past. These concepts, which proved new to the adults taught, acted as a lure to help the adults evaluate previous concepts and develop new concepts of God.

Ideas from Process Thought formed the basis for a six-weeks' course taught to adults. A chapter from Randolph Crump Miller's book (This We Can Believe. New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc. 1976) was used as a text. The course showed that adults were seeking to formulate concepts of God which do not violate their knowledge of the world in which they live. The ideas presented stimulated discussion and group interaction. A beginning was made in developing a more mature concept of God.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

Expressing deep feeling, Emily Jones, a young adult, described her concept of God: "I see God as a loving father, the father I wish I had had, an ideal father, maybe. He takes me upon his lap and gives me all the love and comfort I have missed. I know that this idea is childish, but that is how I see God."

Gordon Allport stated that "in probably no region of personality do we find so many residues of childhood as in the religious attitudes of adults."¹ Chronological age provides an inadequate guide for assessing religious maturity. Allport showed that less pressure is exerted upon people as they grow to become mature in the area of religious sentiment than in other areas of development.

Yet Christian Education among adults aims to develop a more mature relationship between persons and God. Furthermore, the type of relationship depends upon the theological understanding of what God is like. The world in which we live with pluralistic, secular, and atheistic

¹Gordon Allport, The Individual and His Religion (New York: Macmillan, 1950), p. 52.

forces compounds the problem of presenting a view of God using only biblical language. As Christian educationalists we need to present a theological understanding which, while true to the biblical concepts, does not violate the understanding we have of the world from our daily work, recreation, and reading. In educational situations the learners should not need to assume a different perspective as soon as God is discussed. The theological understanding of God may serve to supplement the understanding of the world.

As Whitehead has integrated recent scientific ideas with the teaching of the past, it is the intention of this writer to examine the philosophical concept of God as found in Whitehead's writings as well as the theological understanding which has developed from Whitehead's thought in order to ascertain if the insights gained can be used to help adults achieve religious maturity.

Statement of the Problem

There are several aspects of the problem of seeking to help adults develop a more mature understanding of God. First, one must establish some criteria for judging maturity in this area. Secondly, one must ascertain the stage of development which adults have reached in their understanding of the nature and purpose of God. Thirdly, one needs to develop an educationally viable method of helping adults achieve maturity in their understanding of the nature and purpose of God. Fourthly, one must

ascertain whether a particular concept of God, such as that of process theology, fits the accepted criteria for religious maturity. Lastly, one must devise methods and forms of testing which show whether there had been development in adults, that is, whether they have become more mature.

Delimitations

In this project, the concepts of religious development and maturity are based upon the findings of Ronald Goldman and Gordon Allport, with additional insights from Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. James Fowler provides some guidelines for assessing the stage of religious development.

The understanding of God is based upon Alfred North Whitehead's concept of God and the theological developments of this concept by John B. Cobb, Jr. and David Griffin. The concepts will be used as a lure for helping develop new concepts of God in adults. A course taught by Randolph Crump Miller provides an outline for developing the concepts of God with adults.

Definition of Terms and Basic Assumptions

In defining religious maturity, Allport listed the attributes of a religious sentiment. It is:

1. Well differentiated. This means that faith is reflected upon and that the person assumes a critical

attitude.

ii. Dynamic in character in spite of its derivative nature. This means that although the religious sentiment is derived from childhood misinterpretations and fears and hungers of the body, in maturity it is transformed and provides its own motivational power.

iii. Productive of a consistent morality. Allport stated that the religious sentiment when mature is "consistently directive." Although the relationship between religious beliefs and morality is complex, there is interdependence.

iv. Comprehensive. This means that there is an adequate philosophy of life.

v. Integral. This means that the religious sentiment is part of a pattern which enables the mature person to live realistically in the world of today.

vi. Fundamentally heuristic. By this Allport means that the belief is held tentatively until it can be confirmed. If proven unsatisfactory, such a belief can be abandoned.² So that the project will be of manageable length, the attributes designated "well-differentiated", "comprehensive", and "integral" will be used for examining the nature and purpose of God in process thought.

Assuming an epigenetic type of development, it is

²Ibid., p. 57

necessary to establish what the various stages of development imply. Goldman described the following stages of religious development in children.

i. Pre-religious. In the stage, the ideas of God have a clear pattern of physical identity. There are few doubts and the child accepts almost everything he or she is told.

ii. Sub-religious. The parental image of the deity is still strong and God is seen as a human figure with some of the physical limitations of a human being. God is seen as a touchy, unpredictable, powerful adult.

iii. Personal Thought. At this stage God begins to be conceived in symbolic, abstract, and spiritual terms.³

Just as Allport characterized the religiously mature sentiment by describing certain attributes, so also he depicted childhood religion as being marked by:

- i. egocentrism,
- ii. magical thought, and
- iii. anthropomorphism.

As a child develops into adolescence, there is a period of questioning authority and of seeking for solutions to problems, such as what the nature of God is.⁴

³Ronald Goldman, Readiness for Religion (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), pp. 80, 113, 163 and 194.

⁴Allport, pp. 32 f.

The writer's basic assumption is that a person is a religious being and that he or she develops a religious sentiment. The religious development may be arrested at any stage. The studies made by Goldman, Allport and Piaget will be accepted by the writer as valid.

While concentrating mainly on the cognitive aspects of development, the writer is aware that the cognitive represents but a part of the whole person. However, this part is fundamental. As Whitehead said:

A religion on its doctrinal side can...be defined as a system of general truths, which have the effect of transforming character when they are sincerely held and vividly apprehended. In the long run, your character and your conduct of life depend on your intimate convictions.⁵

So, the present study, based upon the above statement, will deal primarily with consciously held beliefs about God. The focus will be upon the doctrine of the nature and purpose of God.

Outline of Chapters and Procedures

The second chapter will describe the development of adults from a cognitive-psychological approach. Also, after the human development in childhood is examined, a definition of maturity and of the stages of development in adults will be attempted. The writer will establish the

⁵Alfred North Whitehead, Religion in the Making (New York: Macmillan, 1926), p. 15.

relationship between cognitive development and the development of religious sentiments and moral judgements.

The third chapter will present Whitehead's concept of God in the light of the criteria for religious maturity and an assessment of the religious availability of Whitehead's concept for adults seeking to develop a mature religious sentiment.

The fourth chapter will examine the concept of God as developed by Cobb and Griffin. Miller's chapter "Who is God?" will also be scrutinized to assess its usefulness as a course for adults that introduces process thought.

The fifth chapter will contain an outline of an approach for teaching adults. This will include (1) a means of ascertaining the religious development of learners, using the scale worked out by Fowler; (2) the methods suitable for teaching adults; and (3) a way of evaluating the course and of assessing possible development of the learners.

The final chapter will present the conclusion of the project. It will include an estimate of the value of the project and of the contribution its idea could make to the education of adults.

Chapter 2

MATURITY

Mature persons indicate the target group for adult Christian education. They are persons who are presumed to have already achieved a certain degree of self-acceptance, emotional balance, responsibility, intellectual development, and competence in coping with life.¹

Adults in Christian education programs are expected to be mature. For Schaefer, maturity is defined as a "certain degree" of various attributes. The degree is left to the readers' common sense and to the well accepted fact that adults are not children nor are they adolescents.

Goldman's Analysis

Much study has taken place in determining stages of development among children. This type of study which covers physical, social and psychological developments has been extended to religious development. The most definitive work in development of the intellectual and cognitive aspects of religion in children has been undertaken by Ronald Goldman. He based his research upon Piaget's structures of developmental thinking. The three levels of concept formation delineated by Piaget: intuitive,

¹James R. Schaefer, Program Planning for Adult Christian Education (New York: Newman Press, 1972), p. 78.

concrete and propositional became the basis for the three stages of religious development proposed by Goldman.²

Goldman was primarily concerned with religious development in school age children and youth, from 6-18 years of age.³ There were two aspects of his work, first, his research findings, and secondly, his proposals for religious education. It is the former which related to development in general terms.

The first stage of development Goldman called "Early Childhood." The stage he designated "pre-religious." His reason was that, although young children are interested in religion, he found that "there is no indication that they may think in any religious sense."⁴ Goldman's first stage corresponded with Piaget's pre-operational or intuitive stage.

The second stage for Goldman was "Middle Childhood." Goldman called this stage "sub-religious." The experience that the child has of adults and of the world limits the way the child "senses the divine."⁵ The concretistic way

²Ronald Goldman, Religious Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 19.

³Ronald Goldman, "The Development of Religious Thinking," Learning for Living, II: 5 (May 1963), 7.

⁴Ronald Goldman, Readiness for Religion (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), p. 80.

⁵Ibid., p. 105.

of thinking and the literal interpretation of metaphors and descriptive words act as a containing influence for religious ideas. Goldman's stage corresponded to Piaget's concrete or operational stage.

The third stage is the "Late Childhood and Early Adolescent Stage," the stage of Personal Thought. During these years there is a great deal of confusion, a preparatory stage for age 13 or thereabouts, when young people have "more adult thinking about religion." About the age of 13, concrete modes of thinking become less dominant. As adolescents think in more abstract terms, they are able to appreciate the symbolism and spiritual language in which faith is expressed. Further, the adolescent develops a sense of historical continuity making it possible for religious history to become meaningful. This stage corresponded with Piaget's formal operations stage.

Goldman made the point that the development of religious thought is often only a potential in adolescents. Many students, especially the less intelligent ones, do not achieve the level of religious thought by the time they leave school.

Assessment

Goldman limited his study to ages 6-18. By 18, the young person has the capacity to think as an adult. Some of the more able students in Goldman's study achieved

this type of religious thinking, others did not. Goldman's findings is paralleled by James Fowler's research about levels of religious thinking and development in adults.⁶

A further finding of Goldman which is relevant to this project is that there is a gap, widening in adolescence, between the pupil's view of the world and his/her logico-scientific view. This fact, if left uncorrected by an inadequate approach to the Bible, may be present in adults as well as young people.⁷

Goldman stressed the importance of cognitive development, as a major factor in religious development. However, he pointed out that a child may not be consistent in replies to test situations. In one area, for example Bible knowledge, the child may respond at a higher level than in another area, for example, prayer.⁸ Goldman discerned other factors at work as well as cognitive development, namely, social influences, parental attitudes, and church attendance.

Allport's View of Childhood Development

Gordon Allport was aware of Piaget's work. He divided the stages of development into three, not based only on Piaget's mental development, but also on a growing

⁶See below. P. 67.

⁷Goldman, "Development of Religious Thinking", p. 9.

⁸Goldman, Religious Thinking, p. 201.

sense of self-hood.⁹ For Allport, the religious sentiment was a result of both intelligence and self-consciousness.

In early childhood, religious understanding is limited. The child exhibits egocentrism in the thinking processes. Consequently there is misunderstanding of ideas. Thinking about God is marked by anthropomorphism e.g. God is thought of as a man wearing long, white robes.

As the child develops, the stage between concrete and abstract thinking is reached. Allport contributed little at this point. He viewed the time of middle childhood as a transition stage, passing from self-interest to self-disinterestedness¹⁰ particularly in respect to a developing view of Providence. The social influences are great. As the child develops cognitively he or she gradually comprehends the abstractions of religious thought.

Allport was more concerned with adolescence religious experience than in the changes brought about by the ability to understand the abstract. His section on adolescence relates more to the emotion and passion of religious conversion.¹¹

⁹Gordon Allport, The Individual and His Religion (New York: Macmillan, 1950), p. 29.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 32.

¹¹Ibid., p. 32 ff. Allport made no attempt to correlate his stages with chronological or mental ages. From birth through College he grouped under the "Religion of Youth."

However, Allport included a section on College Age youth. Here he was concerned with intellectual development. The point he made is that religious maturity demands strenuous thinking. The rational aspects of the faith must be wrestled with. The assumption underlying this is that, by this stage of development, the mental structures are available for rational thinking. The person is, therefore, capable of seeking religious maturity.¹²

Assessment

For Allport, religious maturity was not possible before both the ability to think logically had developed and the emotional turmoil of adolescence was past. So, while not focusing solely on the cognitive, Allport placed great emphasis upon this area in attaining religious maturity. He suggested an understanding of the theological position held by one's own faith, historic doctrine, a study of comparative religions and a study of what he termed "brilliant minds." By "brilliant minds" he meant the authors of the works of those who had struggled with similar religious problems in the past. The emphasis upon the study of the faith, was an important aspect of the difference between the religion of youth and what he spoke of as the religion of maturity.

¹²Ibid., p. 36 ff.

Kohlberg and Moral Judgement

The relationship between cognitive development and religious development parallels the relationship between cognitive development and moral development. Cognitive development is a pre-requisite but does not entirely account for moral development.

Lawrence Kohlberg was sympathetic with Piaget's work and based his development of moral judgement upon Piaget's system of cognitive development. He extended and at the third level diverged from Piaget's system of moral development. Like Piaget's, Kohlberg's work was based upon a concept of an invariant developmental sequence. There was also reaction and interaction with the environment at each of the stages. Equilibrium was very important. The structure of development was characterized by unique harmony and balance with the environment. When a moral dilemma was introduced and the structure thrown off balance, a new equilibrium was sought.

For Kohlberg there were three levels of moral development, the pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. The first two levels were based upon conforming to convention and the third stage was based upon abstract "meta-rules." The "meta-rules" are "universal principles of justice, of reciprocity and equality of

human rights as individual persons."¹³

The ability to think abstractly and the ability to make moral judgements at the higher levels are both based upon the development of adequate structures. There has been insufficient research as yet to establish the relationship between the stages of moral development and the stages of religious development.

One of the marks of a mature religious sentiment for Allport was that it results in a consistent morality. Both religious maturity and Kohlberg's final stage of moral judgement depend upon, or are based upon, the ability to think abstractly.

Maturity

Allport spoke of religious maturity before defining the term maturity. The term "maturity" is usually applied to adults and often to the process of aging. Maturity is a metaphor. Webster's dictionary defined maturity as being fully grown or fully developed. Hiltner asked: "Is the wide use of the metaphor "maturing" ominous in that it stops when the apples are ripe?"¹⁴ If maturing

¹³Lawrence Kohlberg, "The Child as a Moral Philosopher," Psychology Today, II: 7 (December 1968), 30. The relationship between Piaget's work and Kohlberg's is found in Doug Sholl, "Lawrence Kohlberg and Religious and Moral Education," Religious Education, LXVI: 5 (September-October 1971), 365 f.

¹⁴Seward Hiltner, (ed.) Toward a Theology of Aging (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1975), p.99.

is used in this sense for the early part of adulthood, it would imply that the latter part can only be decrement with no compensating gain. Religious maturity would have little meaning.

Pruyser likewise found difficulty with the word 'mature'. He asked:

If aging is growing, in what sense does growing continue, stop, or change with the years... If aging is maturing, the noun "maturity" introduces normative ideas about the course of the process denoted by the verb, elaborated by notions of "ripe", "over-ripe", and "rot" borrowed from horticulture, or by gastronomic notions of aging used in wine and cheese-making?¹⁵

The metaphor is questioned, once more, because, first, it can have different meanings assigned to it and, secondly, there remains the problem of what happens after the state of maturity has been reached.

The wide and diffuse use of the term "mature" can be illustrated in Erikson's work. He used the term for both of the last two stages in his scheme of human development. When writing about "Generativity versus Stagnation," he stated, "mature man (and woman) needs to be needed, and maturity needs guidance as well as encouragement."¹⁶ Here Erikson was using the term to apply to full growth which is marked by what we refer to as adult behavior to

¹⁵Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁶Erik H. Erikson, in Bernice L. Neugarten (ed.) Middle Age and Aging (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 86.

distinguish such behavior from what we refer to as childish or adolescent.

Later, Erikson described the stage of "Integrity versus Despair" in these terms:

the peak of maturity, the fruit of the seven stages is met in the eighth and final stage, Integrity. This involves an experience which conveys some world order, and spiritual sense.¹⁷

Old age is depicted as the culmination of a life time of growth. Certainly, it presages death, but the emphasis is upon the fructification of life. In this sense, maturity is only attained during the last stage of adulthood.

In order to use the term with more precision, the writer will establish criteria for assessing maturity that may be applied at the various stages of adult development. Gordon Allport delineated the criteria of a mature personality as, first, a widened range of interests, secondly, insight into oneself and thirdly, the development of an adequately embracing philosophy of life.¹⁸ The latter two form two of the levels of religious commitment which Mwalima Imara considered necessary for transformed lives.¹⁹

¹⁷Ibid., p. 87.

¹⁸Allport. op. cit. p. 52

¹⁹Mwalima Imara, "Dying as the Last Stage of Growth," in Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, Death the Final Stage of Growth (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1975) Imara's thesis is that to grow a person must throw off the life society has chosen for one. Transformation implies continual dying and being reborn.

The first level of religious commitment is committing oneself to experiencing one's own identity. The third level is putting one's life together, what it is or "some coherent sense of the world we act in, why we do some of the things we do and why other people do the things they do."²⁰ To these, a fourth is added, the ability to adjust and to reorient to changing circumstances.

Stages of Development in Adults

In order to apply the criteria to stages of development, it is first necessary to decide which theory concerning stages of development are valid. Maves said that "development implies unfolding and expanding in an orderly, predictable and normative pattern."²¹ While most adults would agree that this definition fits childhood development, the knowledge that each of us has that we are in certain respects unique causes us to distrust and also resent the idea that we follow a pattern. In spite of this, a book on stages of development which types people according to chronologically ordered steps of growth is, at the time of writing, in first place on the best seller

²⁰Ibid., pp. 157-8. The second level is the ability to commit oneself to others. The levels parallel Erikson's stages of Identity, Generativity and Integrity.

²¹Paul B. Maves, "Religious Development in Adulthood," in Merton S. Stromman (ed.) Research on Religious Development (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1971), p. 780.

list.²² We face a dilemma.

The factors that influence development are both internal and external, biological and psychosocial. There are various theories to explain how and why we age or develop.

Biological Theories

Kastenbaum listed three theories of aging. First, in the somatic mutation theory, the answer to the question, "Where is aging?" is that it is inside the cell. There are two types of cells, the dividing and the non-dividing. The latter age, the former can be rejuvenated but are prone to cancer. Secondly, according to the theory of immunology, the process of aging produces immunology against the self. There is, thirdly, the theory of aging in the Central Nervous System. Tests in reaction time in older people demonstrate the truth of this most conclusively.²³ The biological theories underscore the fact that development is a process, and that, unless serious illness or death intervenes, the human will age in a predictable pattern.

As well as biological theories of aging, there is a general biological curve of life. There are two ways of

²²Time (December 6, 1976) Passages by Gail Sheehy, was No. 1 in the non-fiction list of the Best Sellers.

²³Robert Kastenbaum, "Theories of Human Aging," Journal of Social Issues XXI: 4 (October 1965), 14 ff.

representing the curve. First, there is a period of growth, from birth to about 25 years of age, and then a period of decline or regressive growth. The second is similar to this but is based on the capacity to reproduce. There is first a period of acquiring the capacity followed by the possession and then the loss of reproductive ability.²⁴

The biological factors alone give us insufficient data for assessing maturity or lack of same. Robert Peck, elaborating on Erikson's stages of personality development maintained that there are only two chronological divisions which are sound, Middle Age and Old Age.²⁵

Psychosocial Theories

Else Frenkel-Brunswik, writing in 1936, recognized stages of development by analysing life stories of individuals. She collected three groups of data. First, she collected evidence of the external events of life such as vocations and hobbies. The second was group data on internal reactions. These data were gathered in interviews and by studying biographies, letters, diaries and so on. The third group of data was the accomplishments and

²⁴Raymond G. "Kuhlen and George G. Thompson (eds.) Psychological Studies of Human Development (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963), p. 163.

²⁵Robert C. Peck, "Psychological Developments in the Second Half of Life," in Neugarten, p. 88.

the productions of the people involved, creative activities and the effect on others.

By comparing the biographical details with the biological, her finding was that certain psychological factors could cause the phases of the biographical curve to be retarded in comparison with the biological. "We find that a number of psychological functions, such as knowledge, experience, and training counteract the biological decline."²⁶ It was her conclusion that "the ability to transpose oneself, to take on another attitude towards life is a character trait which is almost a necessity for success in life."²⁷ For her, the ability to adjust and reorient were almost mandatory. The cognitive factors were included among the factors whose decline is retarded in comparison with the biological.

Frenkel's divisions adumbrate Erikson's. Each period is marked off from the others by certain turning points and, in general, a development in each phase of what was laid out in previous stages.

The stages are marked chronologically. The first of the adult stages, i.e. the third stage of life, begins between the 20th and the 30th year and lasts until about 50 and the fourth begins at 50 and lasts until about 65 and

²⁶Else Frenkel-Brunswik, "Adjustments and Reorientation in the Course of the Life Span," in Kuhlen and Thompson, p. 167 ff.

²⁷Ibid.

the fifth and last goes on till death.²⁸

Robert Peck based his study upon Erikson's stages of the second half of life.²⁹ He did not make the distinct break at about 50 that Frenkel made, but rather enumerated "several different kinds of psychological learnings and adjustments."³⁰ There are links between the qualities he selected and the criteria for maturity.

In Middle Age, the person begins to value wisdom versus physical powers. Peck stated that those who age most successfully "invert their previous value hierarchy. They put the use of their heads above the use of their hands." This would involve self-objectification, and an awareness of the self which would correspond with insight into self.

Peck's second type of learning and adjustment was related to the first. Since the climacteric occurs during this stage of life, he separated it and called it "socializing versus sexualizing in human relationships." There is, then, the opportunity for interpersonal relationships to take on new meaning. For the person who is unable to

²⁸Ibid., p. 165.

²⁹In this project, the writer will not examine the developmental scheme in detail. Erikson's three stages of adulthood were intimacy and distantiation versus self-absorption, generativity versus stagnation and integrity versus despair and disgust.

³⁰Peck, p. 89 ff.

do this, life has little meaning. Frenkel quoted Casanova as saying on the thirty-eighth birthday, "The beginning of my end began on this day."³¹

Thirdly, Peck listed cathectic flexibility versus cathectic impoverishment. This was the most crucial of the adaptive learnings for Peck. "The reason for considering it as a distinct function, perhaps more crucial in middle age than at earlier ages, rests in the fact that this is the period, for most people, when their parents die, their children grow up and leave home, and their circle of friends and relatives of similar age begins to be broken by death."³² Cathectic flexibility is the ability to invest emotional concerns in new friends and activities. This capacity corresponds to the criterion of maturity -- the expanding of interests.

Fourthly, Peck considered mental flexibility versus mental rigidity. "One of the major issues in human growth and living seems to be the question, which will dictate one's life -- oneself, or the events and experiences one undergoes."³³ The philosophy of life which is a mark of the mature person is not, therefore, an inflexible one. To have a philosophy of life does not mean that all the "answers" to life have been worked out.

³¹Frenkel-Brunswik, p. 171.

³²Peck, p. 89.

³³Ibid., p. 90.

In old age, the first adjustment was termed by Peck "ego differentiation versus work-role preoccupation." This involved both insight into one's self and expanding interests.

One critical requisite for successful adaptation to old age may be the establishment of a varied set of valued activities and valued self-attributes, so that any one of several alternatives can be pursued with a sense of satisfaction and worthwhileness. This, at any rate, is what the term ego-differentiation is intended to represent.³⁴

Peck considered this very important for men who retire from a vocation and as possibly critical for women earlier. However, women who played the traditional housewife-mother role find the retirement age critical, particularly if they lose their husbands and begin an entirely new role.

The second adjustment of old age for Peck was "body transcendence versus body preoccupation." The issue, for him, was whether there was gain as well as decrement in the latter years of life and also how at this stage adjustment is made to declining physical powers. Peck selected this decision point because "it must be viewed as one of the goals of human development." While recognizing that "the physical decline occurs, it also takes account of mental and social powers which may actually increase with age, for many people."³⁵

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., p. 91.

Finally, Peck listed "ego transcendence versus ego preoccupation." "One of the new and crucial facts of old age is the appearance of the certain prospect of personal death."³⁶ For Peck, "the successful ager at this final stage would be the person who is purposely active as an ego transcending perpetuation of that culture which, more than anything else, differentiates human living from animal living." This is because for Peck building the future for one's descendants³⁷ was the way to achieve enduring significance. The ability to transcend would depend upon a satisfactory philosophy of life.

Imagery

The imagery used may or may not help the understanding of development. The pictures used have been a line, a plant, a spiral, or a ladder. Frenkel³⁸ was one who saw development as a line, which in adulthood ascended, formed a plateau, and then descended. Erikson drew his epigenetic stages from biology, suggesting that growth was an unfolding which building on each preceeding stage, finally bears fruit.³⁹ Sheehy called development a ladder, using the image of a step for each stage. She suggested

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Descendants mean here future generations.

³⁸Frenkel-Brunswik, p. 165.

³⁹Erikson, p. 86.

upward movement from early adulthood to age 55 when one becomes "mellow."⁴⁰ After the exciting, crisis-full years she described, the term "mellow" may either mean that the rest of one's life is lived in a twilight glow or, to keep closer to the metaphor suggested by "mellow", sink into a state of over-ripeness.

The spiral image was used by Abernethy⁴¹ to illustrate the fact that the tasks of one stage may be faced again at a later stage but not in exactly the same way as previously. A spiral may be quite an unsatisfactory model if used as Peck did to illustrate body transcendence versus body preoccupation. "There are many people whose elder years seem to move in a decreasing spiral, centered around their growing preoccupation with the state of their bodies."⁴²

The dissatisfaction experienced with all the models is that they are inadequate to deal with either the uniqueness of each human being or the unevenness of development. Each has its strong points as well. The plant as a model from biology suggests movement towards some goal, the spiral the idea of repetition which is not merely repetition but incorporates the novel. The line and the ladder

⁴⁰Gail Sheehy, Passages (New York: Dutton, 1976), p. 353.

⁴¹Jean Beaven Abernethy, Old is not a Four-Letter Word! (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975), p. 107.

⁴²Peck, p. 91.

both suggest upward and downward movement, the ladder suggesting more stages in the movement than the line.

For Imara, the religious dimension of personality was what allowed for development of full potential at every stage of adult life. The reason was that religious dynamics provide the direction, the purpose and the commitment which he believed were necessary for optimal growth.⁴³

Sheehy explained development as requiring willingness to move through each passage, of being willing temporarily to surrender security, and familiar but limiting patterns. Although she acknowledged external factors in development, growth came through the individual's willingness to take risks.⁴⁴ Without direction without an adequate philosophy of life, Sheehy's criterion for growth would be insufficient. Imara's explanation can best be related to process thought. The direction comes from God's initial aim. The commitment is willingness to align oneself with God's aim.

Maturity is not the exclusive achievement of any one stage of adult development nor is it a state achieved that precludes room for further growth. It appears that a person may or may not be mature during the whole range of adult life, and this would imply that maturity at one stage is not necessarily the same for each stage of development

⁴³Imara, p. 162.

⁴⁴Sheehy, p. 353.

in adulthood. Maturity, itself, then is a way of living that expresses the optimum growth for the stage of life that an adult has reached. Optimum growth includes the cognitive aspect as well as others.

Mental Changes in Adulthood

Although there are great differences between individual adults, adults generally continue to increase their mastery in achieving and using knowledge. Whereas there is a tendency to agreement concerning theories of child cognitive development, there are wide differences in interpretation of adult cognitive development.

Many factors come into play in testing adult intelligence, such as the willingness of the adult to be tested and to persevere, as well as familiarity with the test items. The results of testing depend upon the health of the adult tested, high initial ability, good education and enriched life through adulthood. Bischof, quoting Cattell, spoke of two types of intelligence in adults. He called them "fluid" and "crystallized". By fluid, he meant innate problem solving ability, and by crystallized the application of fluid. Young adults excel in the former, the fluid, and older adults in crystallized.⁴⁵

⁴⁵Ledford J. Bischof, Adult Psychology (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 214.

There appear to be contrary findings. Some find significant IQ changes over the years, others do not. Some find women's scores drop, others maintain that there is no significant differences between the sexes.⁴⁶ Kimmel summed up findings on changes in intellectual processes in aging:

Certainly up to age 60-65, there is little decline in learning or memory ability; factors of motivation, interest, and lack of recent educational experience are probably more important in learning complex knowledge than age per se. Learning may just take a bit longer...⁴⁷

Age and sex stereotyping, as well as unsuitable tests for adults, may be causes of variant results.

Bischof came to a similar conclusion to Kimmel.

And so we come to the general conclusion that the old dog can learn new tricks but the answer is not a direct and simple one. It appears that the old dog is reluctant to learn new tricks...He may not learn the new trick as rapidly as he did in the past, but learn it he does. Further, the best evidence seems to indicate that if he starts out as a clever young pup, he is very likely to end up as a wise old hound.⁴⁸

Religious Maturity

"Maturity is continuing growth in autonomy and altruism," religious maturity is continuing growth in

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 216 ff.

⁴⁷Douglas C. Kimmel, Adulthood and Aging (New York: Wiley, 1974), p. 381-2.

⁴⁸Bischof, p. 224.

understanding the faith and in living out one's convictions. The six attributes of the religion on maturity given by Allport have been stated (See pp. 3,4, Ch. 1). Allport related these to his three criteria of maturity (See p. 17, Ch. 2). Allport understood, the attributes as ways or avenues that are open for human development. They were the avenue of widening interests, the avenue of insight into one's self and the avenue of integration. A person could be mature but lack a mature religious sentiment. He defined a mature religious sentiment as:

a disposition, built up through experience, to respond favorably, and in certain habitual ways, to conceptual objects and principles that the individual regards as of ultimate importance in his own life, and as having to do with what he regards as permanent or central in the nature of things.⁴⁹

Allport formulated his definition to account for religious differences between individuals and outlooks.

With the exception of the religious genius, the mature person never achieves a complete religious sentiment. Allport, therefore, suggested that achieving is a process which does not advance in an even manner.

⁴⁹Allport, p. 56.

Chapter 3

WHITEHEAD'S CONCEPT OF GOD

"Today there is but one religious dogma in debate. What do we mean by God?"¹

When Aristotle introduced the Prime Mover, God, he did not make a God that was readily available for religious purposes. In commenting on this, Whitehead stated that: "It may be doubted whether any properly general metaphysics can ever, without the illicit introduction of other considerations, get much further than Aristotle."² Whitehead changed his view about what kind of data could licitly contribute to metaphysics. Religion "contributes its own independent evidence which metaphysics must take account of in framing its description."³ Whitehead formulated a philosophical concept of God which has been built upon by Process Theologians. So, while Whitehead's God may be largely the result of metaphysical analysis theologians have found Whitehead's inclusion of God in his philosophy a stimulus for re-evaluating tradi-

¹Alfred North Whitehead, Religion in the Making (New York: Macmillan, 1976), p. 66. (RM)

²Alfred North Whitehead, Science and the Modern World (New York: Free Press, 1967), p. 173. (SMW)

³RM, p. 79.

tional concepts about God and for formulating a theology based on Whitehead's vision of reality.

In this chapter, the writer will relate the understanding of God as presented by Whitehead to three of the criteria of the mature religious sentiment. The three are (1) a differentiated or critical faith, (2) an integrated faith, and (3) a comprehensive faith.⁴ As Whitehead's philosophy is speculative and allows for the place of religious intuition, his concept of God is not just an abstract one. This factor makes the juxtaposition and comparison more feasible than the general concept of the God of metaphysics.

Differentiation

Allport used the word "critical" as only an instance of the quality he wished to describe in a mature religious sentiment. It included the critical tendencies but differentiation implied more than criticism. It implied an articulation of the faith and an ordering of its parts. "Critical" applied to attitudes, involved

⁴See Orlo Strunk, Mature Religion: A Psychological Study (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965), p. 121. Strunk suggested that the three criteria, an integrated faith, a differentiated faith and a comprehensive faith apply more to the area of faith as belief than faith which is more directly concerned with action.

reflections on the faith⁵ -- faith which for Christians had its basis in a concept of God.

In order to help them develop a more mature concept of God, the adult learners will be presented with the criticisms that Whitehead made of traditional notions and the articulation of his concept of God. The learners will not be expected to accept uncritically Whitehead's philosophy but rather to follow his reasoning. They may, or may not, accept his understanding of God. The ideas presented will act as a lure to help in the developing of new concepts. The process will facilitate vivid apprehension of the concept. The intimate conviction should then influence the faith and result in a more mature attitude.

Whitehead, in formulating his concept of God, reflected on traditional concepts of God. He criticized the ones that needed the "long-bow of mysticism" for evidence of God's existence. Such concepts created a gulf between the World and God -- with God as eminently real.⁶ For Whitehead, God was not eminently real. In the philosophy of organism, God is an actual entity, as is also the most trivial puff of existence in far-off empty space.⁷

⁵Gordon Allport, The Individual and His Religion (New York: Macmillan, 1950), pp. 58 and 59.

⁶Alfred North Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas (New York: Free Press, 1967), p. 169. (AI)

⁷Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 28, 168, 116. (PR)

In the categoreal scheme, Whitehead stated that "actual entities are the final real things." God is real but he is not eminently real.⁸ The ultimate is called "creativity." God is its primordial, non-temporal accident.⁹ "Creativity", "many", and "one" are the three notions that complete the Category of the Ultimate.¹⁰ All actual entities exemplify the category, the other actual entities are not less real than God.

God as Creator

"In the beginning, God created." (Gen. 1:1)
 For Whitehead God was creator in a limited sense only. First, God was not BEFORE all creation but WITH all creation.¹¹ Second, God was creator in the sense that each actual entity derived its basic conceptual aim from God. Whitehead did not ascribe the ultimate creativity of the world to God. Each actual entity inherently embodied creativity. God, however, was the organ of novelty. Without God, there would be a "dead level of ineffectiveness."¹² For Whitehead, the actual occasion was self-creative, but God evoked novelty. Christian posited that although this was not "the traditional concept of divine creation", it would be fair to say that in Whitehead's

⁸Ibid., p. 27.

⁹Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 31.

¹¹Ibid., p. 521.

¹²Ibid., p. 339.

system the function of God had a place analagous to the doctrine of divine creation in other systems. He drew attention to Augustine's, City of God, XII, 26, which said that artisans create external forms but God alone is responsible for the inherent form which, without being made itself, makes not only natural physical forms, but also the very souls of living things. God made the world when no world...existed."¹³ Christian stated that the reason that God can be called creator is that God does what no temporal actuality can do for another actual entity or for itself.¹⁴

One of Whitehead's antitheses was that: "It is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God."¹⁵ The world creates God because the primordial nature of God is abstract and, without the influence of the world on the consequent nature, God would not be real. God creates the world in the sense explained above.

God as Omnipotent

A further instance of the differences between traditional formulations of concepts of God and Whitehead's

¹³Aurelius Augustinus, The City of God Against the Pagans, Books XII-XV (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 119.

¹⁴William Christian, An Interpretation of Whitehead's Metaphysics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967) p. 379.

¹⁵PR, p. 528.

God is that for Whitehead God was not omnipotent. His criticism of "unqualified omnipotence" was related to the former criticisms of God as eminently real and God as creator. Speaking of the exemption of the nature of God from metaphysical categories, Whitehead claimed that for the theologians God became "the one absolute, omnipotent, omniscient source of all being."¹⁶ As such, Whitehead said, God would be the source of all evil, as well as good. Whitehead preferred Plato's suggestion that God's power was persuasive.¹⁷

In writing about the power of God, Christian stated that God cannot make compatible an intrinsic incompatibility, God cannot supplant the freedom of the actual occasions, God cannot prevent the perishing of objective occasions, and he cannot annul the past. On the other hand, God is the timeless lure for the creative process of nature. God "persuades" the self-creative activity of the concrescence toward the maximum satisfaction which its actual world permits. God makes possible objective immortality, and evokes the novel. Christian's conclusion is that for Whitehead God's power is conditioned but not limited.¹⁸

¹⁶AI, p. 169. See PR, pp. 519, 520, and SMW, p.179.

¹⁷AI, p. 169. See Stephen Lee Ely, The Religious Availability of Whitehead's God (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1942), p. 45.

¹⁸Christian, pp. 397-399.

God with Personal Attributes

As in traditional theology, God in Whitehead's philosophy was spoken of as having personal attributes. The Galilean origin of Christianity was emphasized as well as a "strand of thought which differs from the concept of God as 'divine Caesar'."¹⁹

The essence of Christianity is the appeal to the life of Christ as a revelation of the nature of God and of his agency in the world. The record is fragmentary, inconsistent, and uncertain. It is not necessary for me to express any opinion as to the most likely tale of historic fact...There can be no doubt as to what elements in the record have evoked a response from that is best in human nature. The Mother, the Child, and the bare manger: the lowly man, homeless and self-forgetful, with his message of peace, love, and sympathy: the suffering, the agony, the tender words as life ebbed, the final despair: and the whole with the authority of supreme victory.²⁰

The theme is continued in the description of the consequent nature of God in Process and Reality.²¹ "Love neither rules, nor is it unmoved; also it is a little oblivious as to morals". God is tender, patient and compassionate and loves the world.²²

Whitehead affirmed the goodness of God. There have been varied opinions about whether the God of Whitehead was good or not. Ely, on the one hand, stated that

¹⁹PR, p. 520.

²⁰AI, p. 167.

²¹PR, p. 520.

²²Ibid., pp. 525 and 532.

this "God is not primarily good. He does not will the good."²³ Christian, on the other hand, believed that Whitehead had been unjustly criticized and that his God was good for the world because he was good in himself. "Because of the all-inclusiveness of his valuation of possibilities," he can present to any situation the best "for that impasse."²⁴

Allport illustrated differentiation by quoting the descriptions given by two young ladies. Each described her father. The first described her father as all good and the second described her father as having both strengths and weaknesses. It was the latter who showed herself more mature as she was able to appreciate her father while recognizing that he was not perfect. There appears to be a relationship with the way the lady in Allport's illustration realistically viewed her father and Whitehead's concept of God who is an actual entity but who is different from ordinary actual entities. This is particularly so in Whitehead's understanding of the power of God.

Integration

The aspect which Allport termed integration meant a religious sentiment which evidenced a "homogeneous

²³Ely, p. 11. SMW, p. 179.

²⁴Christian, p. 400. See PR, p. 373 and SMW, p.179.

pattern." The pattern which he termed homogeneous included the weaving of scientific ideas with the teaching of the past ages. As an example, he stated that one who is mature admits that human conduct is to a large degree determined.²⁵ Whitehead met Allport's criterion of integration by weaving scientific ideas with teaching of the past ages. The homogeneous pattern could include the integration of one's faith and a philosophy of life. Whitehead provides a model for this latter aspect of integration in the way in which he integrates his concept of God into the categoreal scheme. A further example of integration in Whitehead is the way in which he integrated the two natures of God into a coherent concept. The two latter ways of integration will be examined.

To a great extent, Whitehead integrated his concept of God into the categoreal scheme. God for Whitehead was an actual entity, what Leclerc preferred to call a unique actual entity.²⁶ God was the principle of concretion, providing the initial aim for all other actual entities.²⁷ Although God was different from all other

²⁵Allport, p. 70. Allport stated that the person who is mature has difficulty with the problem of evil. This issue will not be discussed in this part of the project.

²⁶Ivor Leclerc, Whitehead's Metaphysics (London: Allen & Unwin, 1958), p. 192.

²⁷PR, pp. 374, 47 and 34.

actual entities God was not the exception to all metaphysical principles "invoked to save their collapse."²⁸

Whitehead described God as having three natures, primordial, consequent and superjective. God conceived as primordial "is the graduated order of appetition."²⁹

An appetition includes the urge towards realization of datum conceptually prehended.³⁰ God's primordial nature is the envisagement of all eternal objects, or forms of definiteness, the complete conceptual valuation of all potentiality.

God as the principle of concrescence selects the eternal objects relevant to the actual occasion.³¹ As Whitehead stated: "The differentiated relevance of eternal objects to each instance of the creative process requires their conceptual realization in the primordial nature of God. ..The general relationships of eternal objects to each other, relationships of diversity and of pattern, are their relationships in God's conceptual realization."³²

To have ingression into an actual occasion, the eternal objects must have a "relational essence."³³ Referring to the ontological principle, Whitehead argued

²⁸Ibid., p. 521.

²⁹PR, p. 315.

³⁰Ibid., p. 47.

³¹Leclerc, p. 196.

³²PR. p. 392.

³³SMW, p. 198.

that eternal objects must be "somewhere" and that "somewhere" means "some actual entity." The "somewhere" is the non-temporal actual entity -- God.

God as primordial is concerned for the occasion's depth of satisfaction "as an intermediate setp towards the fulfilment of (God's) own being. His tenderness is directed towards each actual occasion as it arises."³⁴ At this point in Whitehead's exposition of the nature of God there is no apparent concern for the enduring individual.

The primordial is one aspect of God's dipolar nature. It is the mental pole. The primordial is an abstraction from God's total actuality, "it is a mere factor in God."³⁵ The primordial is not conscious. The other pole is the physical pole which in God is his consequent nature. This is conscious and is the "weaving of God's physical feelings upon his primordial concepts."³⁶

Whitehead used images to describe the consequent nature of God. One such image was of God's tender care that nothing be lost. God's consequent nature was his judgement on the world. Whitehead saw God as patiently and "tenderly saving the turmoil of the immediate world by the completion of his own nature."

All actual occasions perish, but in God's consequent nature there is no loss, God is "everlasting."

³⁴PR, p. 73.

³⁵Ibid., p. 50.

³⁶Ibid., p. 524.

The "derivate nature of God is consequent upon the creative advance of the world."³⁷

Much of Whitehead's writing about God was devoted to the primordial nature and much less to the consequent. There was even fewer references to the superjective nature of God. After describing the two other natures briefly, Whitehead added "the superjective nature of God is the character of the pragmatic value of his specific satisfaction qualifying the transcendent creativity."³⁸

Although Whitehead did not use the term "superjective," his description of the relationship between God and the world implied it. Whitehead said: "God's satisfaction qualifies the temporal world."³⁹

He further stated that the notion of a supreme being must apply to an actuality in process of composition and described the process. He concluded: "the issue is the unified composition which assumes its function as datum operative for the future historic world."⁴⁰

In discussing whether Whitehead's conception of God was consistent and coherent with the principles of his system, Christian showed that the differences between God

³⁷Ibid., pp. 524-5.

³⁸Ibid., p. 135.

³⁹Ibid., p. 532. See John W. Lansing, "The Natures of Whitehead's God," Process Studies, III: 3 (Fall 1973)

⁴⁰Alfred North Whitehead, Modes of Thought (New York: Macmillan, 1938), p. 128.

and other actual entities were not categoreal ones. He instanced that God originated from the mental pole (PR 54) while actual entities originate from the physical (with the qualification made on P. 343 of PR), and that God, unlike other actual entities, does not perish.

In a careful study of Whitehead's concept of God in comparison with the categoreal scheme, Christian raised questions about God in relation to the category of transmutation and of reversion. Because of the completeness of God's conceptual experience, God is exempt from some of the conditions which limit the actual occasion. Further Christian delineated difficulties that arise from the consequent nature of God. These occur in relation to the satisfaction, in its unity, determinateness, and finality.⁴¹

Certainly Whitehead did not unfold the phases of concrescence of God in the detailed scheme as he did for actual occasions. His statement that God was the exemplification of all the principles would imply that the categoreal scheme would equally apply to God as well as actual occasions. Whitehead did stress the differences between actual occasions, which are temporal, and the one non-temporal actual entity, God.

Whitehead's concept of God was not only a metaphysical scheme. It depended "upon elucidation of somewhat

⁴¹Christian, pp. 289-301.

exceptional elements which (might) roughly be classed together as religious and moral intuitions."⁴² Whitehead attempted to integrate his concept of God into his cosmological scheme, but had done even more than this. He had added to the integration insights of religious intuitions.

Judged by Allport's criterion of religious maturity, Whitehead, to a considerable extent, met the requirement for integration. Although he often wrote as if the two natures -- the primordial and the consequent -- were separate, he also spoke of the interwoven character of the two.

Further, there is a high correlation between Whitehead's explanation of freedom and of Allport's criterion. An actual occasion prehends data from the past, and receives its initial aim from God. The actual occasion has freedom to eliminate from feeling and, by the category of reversion, to evoke novelty. However, the actual occasion is not entirely free.

Comprehensiveness

Allport maintained that to be religiously mature, persons needed to bring to the "hurly-burly of the world" some kind of order. Religion must infuse all life with motive. Allport quoted William James who defined religion

⁴²PR, p. 521.

as "the feeling, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine."⁴³ He went on to compare this with Whitehead's definition of religion as "the art and theory of the internal life of man, so far as it depends on the man himself and on what is permanent in the nature of things."⁴⁴

Comprehensiveness included for Allport a concept of the divine and also of what is permanent in the nature of things. Subjective religion, moreover, conferred unity to the mind and provided significance to lives of people.

Having already briefly surveyed Whitehead's concept of the nature of the divine, the writer will turn to other aspects of Whitehead's thought, those concerning the permanence of things and the interrelatedness of things.

Metaphysics deals with both the flux and permanences of things. Among the list of permanences of things, Whitehead listed God.⁴⁵ In this reference Whitehead spoke of God as primordial: in this aspect God was non-temporal and eternal. God was not affected by the world but affected the world. God's valuation of eternal objects was not regarded as a succession of events. It was a non-temporal act.

⁴³Allport, p. 67.

⁴⁴RM, p. 16.

⁴⁵PR, p. 318.

God's consequent nature was affected by the world. It was not eternal but "everlasting." There was process in the consequent nature of God, but it was devoid of "perpetual perishing."⁴⁶

The consequent nature of God is the fluent world become "everlasting" by its objective immortality in God. Also the objective immortality of actual occasions requires the primordial permanence of God, whereby the creative advance ever re-establishes itself endowed with initial subjective aim derived from the relevance of God to the evolving world.⁴⁷

The effect of the world on God and God's effect on the world illustrated the evolution of God's consequent nature without "derogation to the eternal completion of its primordial conceptual nature."⁴⁸ Whitehead attempted an integration of permanence and flux: an integration which he believed was expressed in the best Hebrew poetry and in the hymn "Abide With Me."⁴⁹ This implied that such integration was not just the result of examining the nature of things but also included religious intuition.

The use of the ontological principle was another way in which Whitehead integrated the divine element into the cosmological scheme. The ontological principle "constitutes the first step in the description of the universe as a solidarity of many actual entities." As Whitehead continued his discussion of the fact and form,

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 527.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., (See p. 521.)

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 320.

he spoke of the "self-creative unity of the universe." The way in which God related to this was that God provided the initial aim, the primordial appetition which was an aim at intensity. The "flux of forms of history" was constituted by the decisions of actual occasions and of the decision of God's nature.⁵⁰ "In God's nature permanence was primordial and flux was derivative from the World: in the World's nature, flux was primordial and permanence was derivative from God."⁵¹

In the categoreal scheme, Whitehead stated the principle of relativity:

That the potentiality for being an element in a real concrescence of many entities into one actuality, is the one general metaphysical character attaching to all entities, actual and non-actual and that every item in its universe is involved in each concrescence. In other words, it belongs to the nature of a 'being' that it is a potential for every 'becoming.' This is the 'principle of relativity.'⁵²

As an actual entity, God was therefore a potential for every becoming. The result was that God's transcendence was not absolute. One of the antitheses stated that it was true to say that God transcends the world as to say that the world transcended God.⁵³ Christian examined not only the way Whitehead spoke of the transcendence of God but also of God's immanence. Christian concluded his chapter with a summary and added:

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 64, and 104.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 529.

⁵²Ibid., p. 33.

⁵³Ibid., p. 528.

Finally, it may be remarked that Whitehead's theory of God and the world has proved to be reasonably consistent and coherent. The functions of actual occasions supplement, and do not supplant or supercede the functions of God. The converse is true also. God does not negate or inhibit or compete with actual occasions. On the contrary, God evokes them into being and sustains their achievement."⁵⁴

Whitehead's concept of God was most comprehensive in that, by reason of God's complete valuation of all eternal objects there was in every actual occasion definite relevance derived from God.

Allport's criterion of comprehensiveness, being in part based upon Whitehead's definition of religion, bears positive correlation with it. However, Allport added Whitehead's definition to that of William James because it focused upon a different aspect of religion. Allport wrote: "Whitehead's definition of religion does not require a conception of the divine."⁵⁵ However, knowing that the nature of things includes facts and forms, includes both actual entities and eternal objects, and that without God's purpose there would not be valuation, gradation, ordering, comparison, and differentiation of eternal objects, it follows that "what is permanent in the nature of things" does in fact include a concept of the divine and an understanding of God's purpose.

One final point Allport added to his criterion of comprehensiveness was tolerance for other religious

⁵⁴Christian, p. 381.

⁵⁵Allport, p. 67.

outlooks.⁵⁶ Whitehead's philosophical scheme has allowed for and even opened up new ways of dialogue between the religions of the West and the East. In this respect Whitehead met the criterion of comprehensiveness that Allport believed necessary for religious maturity.

Conclusion

Both Whitehead and Allport spoke of religion in a universal sense and drew their examples from religions other than Christianity. Both, however, wrote out of the Christian background and have a similar viewpoint.

Using Allport's three criteria for religious maturity it can be said that Whitehead's understanding of God is differentiated, integrated and comprehensive. It is also clear that Whitehead's God is more available for religious purposes than Ely allowed. While it may be true that Whitehead's God is not able to satisfy all who look for an object of devotion,⁵⁷ the concept of God as outlined in Whitehead's philosophy has become the basis on which the process theologians, whose work the writer will examine in the next chapter, have articulated a concept of God which uses biblical images more explicitly than Whitehead.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ely, p. 54.

Chapter 4

CONCEPTS OF GOD IN COBB, GRIFFIN AND MILLER

Cobb's and Griffin's Understanding of God

Whitehead, in his philosophy, attempted a "synthesis of that knowledge which forces itself upon the attention of the honest and open mind."¹ Cobb and Griffin, basing their theology upon the synthesis, have provided a basis for re-evaluating concepts of God in the light of the world we live in today. Because the adult learner will face such a radical new concept and the concept will act as a lure for development of ideas, he or she will have the opportunity to become more mature. In this chapter, some of the aspects of the concept will be examined.²

In the foreword to Process Theology the authors

¹John B. Cobb, Jr., A Christian Natural Theology (London: Lutterworth Press, 1965), p. 15.

²Other issues which will not be discussed are the societal or entitative view of God (see *ibid.*, pp. 14 and 190 ff, and Delwin Brown, "Freedom and Faithfulness in Whitehead's God," Process Studies, II: 2 (Summer 1972); the two ways of explicating omnipresence, omnispatiality and non-spatiality (see Cobb, p. 196 ff; and Donald W. Sherburne, "Whitehead Without God", in Delwin Brown, Ralph E. James, and Gene Reeves (eds.) Process Philosophy and Christian Thought (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971), p. 309 ff and the origin of the initial aim (see Cobb, p. 180 ff)

warned that the word God would be used in a different way from some traditional usages. They made five rejections. They were the use of God as cosmic moralist, of God as unchanging and passionless absolute, of God as controlling power, of God as sanctioner of the status quo, and of God as male.³ In their second chapter, the authors explained that the interpretation of God is based not only upon Whitehead but also upon a return to biblical tradition.⁴ Whitehead's contribution to the concept of God was in the enrichment and clarification of the nature of God.⁵

Responsive Love

Cobb and Griffin posited that Whitehead's philosophy clarified the meaning of the biblical expression that God is love. In Process Thought God is responsive as well as creative love. God is not impassible. Both the Thirty-nine Articles and the Westminster Confession asserted that God is "without body, parts, or passions." Cobb and Griffin affirmed what other theologians⁶ have said that God's love is responsive to human beings, and that God

³John B. Cobb, Jr., and David Ray Griffin, Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), pp. 8-9.

⁴Ibid., p. 40.

⁵Ibid., p. 43.

⁶H. Maldwyn Hughes, Christian Foundations: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine (London: Epworth Press, 1948), pp. 71-72.

enjoys human beings and suffers with them.⁷

God is not simple as in classical theism. In the theology of Anselm, for example, God is compassionate in terms of our experience but not compassionate in terms of God's being. God loved without passion. In Process Thought God is dipolar. The abstract pole is eternal, absolute, independent, and unchangeable, whereas the concrete pole is temporal, relative, dependent, and constantly changing. Whitehead, Cobb and Griffin spoke of the two natures of God as the consequent and the primordial. The two in Whitehead's thought are often spoken of as if they are separate, but are also described as woven together. Cobb and Griffin based their understanding of the nature of God partly upon Hartshorne.⁸ The two poles are equated with aspects which imply a unity of the nature of God which is often lacking in Whitehead.

It is in the consequent nature that Whitehead's God is responsive to human beings and the world. He is the "great companion -- the fellow-sufferer who understands."⁹ The reciprocal relationship is expressed in the statement that "the love in the world passes into the love in heaven, and floods back again into the world."¹⁰

⁷Cobb and Griffin, p. 47. ⁸Ibid.

⁹Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 532.

¹⁰Ibid.

God's responsiveness is allied to God's knowledge. God's omniscience expresses an abstract characteristic of God i.e. that He knows all that is knowable at any particular time. God's knowledge is dependent upon the decisions made by actual occasions from second to second. God responds to the world so that while God's knowledge is unsurpassable, it is not knowledge of the future. Further, "it is not merely the content of God's knowledge which is dependent, but God's own emotional state."¹¹ God has the element of compassion in His love. Cobb and Griffin affirmed God as creative love, and the divine creative love as persuasive.

Persuasive Power and Omnipotence

God as omnipotent means that God is responsible for all that happens in the way in which it happens. It means that God is the "all-determining reality."¹² If God determines everything, the problem arises of just how responsible persons are for their failings.

For Cobb the solution to the problem is that God's power is persuasive power. He stated that: "compulsion can be exercised on others only in proportion to their powerlessness. Persuasion is the means of exercising

¹¹Cobb and Griffin, p. 48.

¹²Wolfhart Pannenberg, The Apostles' Creed (London: SCM Press, 1972), p. 26.

power upon the powerful."¹³ God's power can be spoken of as omnipotence if it means that God is exercising the optimum power for realizing the good. God's urge is towards the best and the freedom of the one whom God seeks to persuade.

Wishing to recognize both the reality of evil and the power of God, Cobb referred to God's power as persuasive. God valued intensity of feelings even at the expense of endangering order and harmony.¹⁴

Ross criticized Cobb's use of the term persuasive power. He asked if Cobb's new concept of God's power really was closer to the New Testament picture, but he gave no evidence to the contrary. He asked if the old concept of God's power might not be the right one and "Cobb's new conception just a misleading effort to tailor theology to a misguided and short-sighted period in human history?"¹⁵ It is, the writer believes, an attempt to define God in terms more acceptable to this period of time, but the criticism above failed to appreciate the philosophy underlying the new conception.

Hare and Madden set out five arguments against the process view of God's power as persuasive. First, they

¹³John B. Cobb, Jr., God and the World (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 90.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 94.

¹⁵James F. Ross, "God and the World: A Review Article." Process Studies. I: 2 (Summer 1972), 165.

accepted some degree of persuasiveness but asked why God's power should be conceived exclusively as persuasive. Secondly, the authors did not find in process theologians' formulations of the theory an attempt to explain why so many remained unpersuaded by this God. Thirdly, they answered a hypothetical reply to the second argument. "If it is replied that a persuasive God can be expected to maximize only creativity and freedom, and not good acts and experiences, we point out that the process theists have no more produced a theodicy that shows that the limitations of creativity and freedom in this world are compatible with the exercise of great persuasive power than they have produced a theodicy showing that the extent and distribution of evil acts and experiences are compatible with great persuasive power." Fourthly, if the last objection is not met then there might be a great persuasive power that is evil rather than good. Fifthly, there is a need for an experiential theodicy, theodicy the authors claimed, that "no process theist has produced."¹⁶

In turn, the objections made by Madden and Hare were replied to by Dalton Baldwin. Baldwin affirmed that God's power is persuasive and proceeded to produce counter arguments for each of the Hare and Madden points. His arguments are first, that God would not intervene to

¹⁶Peter H. Hare and Edward H. Madden, "Evil and Persuasive Power," Process Studies, II: 1 (1971), 44 and 45.

remove excess evil because it would remove the expression of responsible freedom. Secondly, Baldwin pointed out that Whitehead did provide for the pragmatic evaluation. "Arbitrary intervention would distort the evaluation that is based on pragmatic evidence." Thirdly, it is human beings who can make deductions on the predictable continuity of order in nature and not depend on "stop-gap" intervention from God. Fourthly, interventions may not be equitable for all persons in the world. To Baldwin, "Whitehead's conceptuality explains the rise of good and the rise of evil without making God responsible for any evil which cannot be justified."¹⁷

Barnhart in his reply to Hare and Madden asked whether persuasion is necessarily weakness and coercion necessarily strength. Barnhart pointed out the ambiguity in using either persuasion or coercion as good or evil. Hare and Madden are "emphasizing not the frustration of desires in order to attain an ideal but rather the more effective, efficient, and successful use of power to approximate the ideal."¹⁸ Barnhart stated: "Hare and

¹⁷Dalton D. Baldwin, "Evil and Persuasive Power: A Response to Hare and Madden," Process Studies, III: 4 (Winter 1973), 271.

¹⁸J. E. Barnhart, "Persuasive and Coercive Power in Process Metaphysics," Process Studies, III: 3 (Fall 1973), 154 ff.

Madden seem to be confused about Cobb on this point and Cobb is perhaps partly responsible for the confusion." So, while the term "persuasion" may be interpreted to mean weakness, for Cobb it is far from weak. As a model for interpersonal relationships persuasion has great appeal.¹⁹

God as Promoting Enjoyment

In Process Theology, God as promoting enjoyment is contrasted with God as cosmic moralist. To indicate that God is not unconcerned about morals, the point is made by Cobb and Griffin that God is not primarily concerned with morals. Allport claimed that a mature faith resulted in consistent morals. Cobb and Griffin are not speaking against morals but against a moralism which, among other things, regards certain forms of enjoyment as inherently evil, sex being quoted as one. Whitehead spoke of Christian love as being "a little oblivious as to morals."²⁰ Maybe, he, too, was concerned as were the joint authors with the negativistic attitude to natural forms of enjoyment.

The notion of cosmic moralist is linked to that of God as omnipotent in the sense of controlling power. The existence of suffering in a world controlled by an omni-

¹⁹Randolph Crump Miller, This We Can Believe (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1976), p. 56 ff.

²⁰Whitehead, p. 521.

potent, loving God has often been rationalized by considering suffering as a means for promoting "desired moral and religious attitudes."²¹

God's purpose in Process Theology is to promote enjoyment in all creatures. Therefore, there must be concern not only for one's own enjoyment but also thought for others. Consequently, moral attitudes are important even if not primary. In Process Theology morality stands in the service of enjoyment.

Whitehead used the term "enjoyment." "In each actuality there are two concrescent poles of realization -- 'enjoyment' and 'appetition', that is, the 'physical' and the 'conceptual'. For God the conceptual is prior to the physical, for the World the physical poles are prior to the conceptual poles."²² In Cobb and Griffin the term "enjoyment" is used partly in the sense that Whitehead used "satisfaction." "The satisfaction is the attainment of the private ideal which is the final cause of the concrescence." Enjoyment, for Cobb and Griffin, occurs in the process as well.

The word "joy" has been a favorite with certain Christian hymn writers. Fanny Crosby wrote:

Blessed assurance Jesus is mine.
O what a foretaste of glory divine. (UMHB 224)

Samuel Medley's hymn based on Job 19:25 reads:

²¹Cobb and Griffin, p. 55. ²²Whitehead, p. 529.

I know that my redeemer lives
 What joy the blest assurance gives. (UMHE 445)

Henry Van Dyke wrote the Hymn to Joy.

Joyful, joyful we adore thee
 ...
 All thy works with joy surround thee.

Joy in the hymns has a differing emphasis. In Cobb and Griffin the emphasis is upon the intrinsic goodness of all of life, rather than only on the joy which comes from the assurance of God's saving grace and that joy found in worship.

Creative Love as Adventurous

God's creative love which is persuasive rather than coercive is love which is willing to take risks. The risk is that God's initial aim can be ignored. Therefore, God's creative impulse is adventurous.

God as adventurous, as the originator of novelty, is contrasted with God as the sanctifier of the status quo. God is the source of order both in Whitehead and in Process Theology. Order is a condition for excellence rather than a structure which stifles constructive change. "The art of progress is to preserve order amid change, and to preserve change amid order."²³ It is God who promotes novelty.

The third way in which God is adventurous is that

²³Ibid., p. 515.

God's own life is adventurous. The consequent nature of God is responsive to the actual occasions of the world and so there is change and adventure in God.

God as Both Female and Male

God as the integration of two natures, the primordial and the consequent, is contrasted with God as stereotypically male. Cobb and Griffin compared the two poles of God with the masculine and feminine aspects of the Yin and Yang of Taoism. The tender elements of the consequent nature enable process theologians to affirm the stereotypically female elements of God's nature.

Assessment

Cobb and Griffin have developed the notion of God as a loving, compassionate being, inclusive of both male and female characteristics. God is concerned for people's enjoyment of the intrinsic goodness of life. The nature of God, while based upon Whitehead's concept of God, more explicitly incorporated biblical notions of God as love and as creator, but with added meaning. For them, the notion of deity presented is convincing and so illuminates human experience and coheres with our understanding of the world.

The value of the study for the writer's purpose is the polemic against the five traditional theological positions regarding God. These according to the joint

authors are neither biblically sound nor are they acceptable today. The result is that we have an exposition which is based upon Whitehead's philosophy and also upon an understanding of human nature gained from psychology.

The stress is upon the God whom we can imitate. Whitehead said that we study God in order to be like Him. We have a model for our lives in God, the God who was revealed in Jesus Christ. The model is for us to enjoy life so all can enjoy life, to be responsive to the sufferings of others and to use persuasion as much as possible.

It is interesting to note that we sometimes must use and regret using control, but God never uses his power in this way. To "play God" according to this thought means to be persuasive in the best sense of the word.

In developing a more mature understanding of the nature of God, the establishment of a model could perform a useful function. The Christian faith has always expected both worship of God and commitment. The nature of God delineated by the Process Theologians could inspire commitment to a way of living as parallel as possible to the ideal inspired by God's nature.

The picture of God as stern judge, moralist, and stereotypically male inspires as much distaste as it does awe. For the disenchanted, the God of Process Theology could open up new avenues of thought about God.

In Cobb's and Griffin's writings, the interrelatedness of all God's creatures is emphasized. The focus is upon a better understanding of ecology and of the place of the human being in God's creation.

This we Can Believe²⁴

Randolph Crump Miller wrote for the layperson from an empirical perspective, basing his work upon the philosophy of Whitehead. However, he used traditional and biblical concepts as well. He wrote of these as a mixture of models and as a series of names.

The models are not models for imitating but rather ones something like chemical models which lead to envisaging something which we cannot see physically. In this way, we realize that there is more than can be captured by language. Using models, Miller dealt with God as love, God as merciful and God as good.²⁵

When he spoke of God as personal he distinguished between God as a person and God as personal by using the illustration of the archaic form of the Lord's Prayer. In "Our Father which art in heaven," the which referred to a legal person rather than to a human person.²⁶

Miller focused upon God in worship. He believed that without God, human beings do not achieve full

²⁴Miller.

²⁵Ibid., p. 62.

²⁶Ibid., p. 60.

humanity; and without worship human beings do not come into relationship with God. He placed great importance upon Whitehead's statement that "The worship of God is not a rule of safety -- it is an adventure of the spirit, a flight after the unattainable."²⁷ God is the everlasting companion who brings joy and adventure to worship.

Miller's emphasis upon worship and community reveals his tendency to be primarily concerned with the human side of God's creation. In this way, he differed from both Cobb and Griffin who are more ecologically oriented and concerned with the interrelatedness of the whole of life.

God's work is both incarnational and sacramental.²⁸ God is incarnate in all His creatures. His incarnation in Jesus changed the structures of society for it was Jesus who fully prehended God, or, in other words, grasped at the full meaning of God. In a worshipping community, for Miller, there exists a mutual prehending of God.

Furthermore, in our understanding of God at work, we discover God's ingression; God is immanent; God comes into human life. This leads to two fundamental religious principles: God's work is both incarnational and sacramental. There is a basis for our understanding of how God could be present in and work through Jesus and of how God could be found in and through the sacraments of the church.²⁹

²⁷Alfred North Whitehead, Science and the Modern World (New York: Macmillan, 1925), pp. 268-9.

²⁸Miller, p. 62.

²⁹Ibid., p. 61.

In the final section of his chapter entitled "The Christian God", he distinguished between the god of all religions and philosophy and the God of the Christian faith. He underscored his aim for the chapter. He wished to give meaning to the word of symbol "God" so that our devotion will be directed to a God we know.

Assessment

Miller's chapter expressed many of the concerns of Cobb and Griffin. He wrote about God as stereotypically male, God as all good, and God as all powerful. Miller placed an almost equal emphasis upon our observation of natural events and upon Whitehead's philosophical concepts. For example, Miller stated: "If we think of God as having an initial aim or purpose for human beings we are led to the consideration in the light of human experience."

In the light of Allport's criteria for maturity, it is possible to compare Miller's ideas of the fatherhood of God with the way in which the two ladies described their fathers. Miller claimed:

Jesus was selective about the attributes of fatherhood that he applied to God. It was the projection of an ideal, not the divinization of human fatherhood. Certain elements of fatherhood are rejected in this model, for example, a father's finiteness, partiality, maleness, sexuality, and (at least for Jesus) absolute power ... The model probably cannot stand alone even when properly qualified, and we

should mix it with other models.³⁰

It would appear that Miller's model is well differentiated. Jesus differentiated, if Miller is correct, concerning His own father, Joseph, and even more so in his idea of a "heavenly Father."

Miller's chapter, setting the understanding of the nature and purpose of God within the context of the church and worship, provides an adequate resource for introducing an adult class to concepts of God which will evoke discussion and could lead to an evaluation of the learner's understanding of the nature and purpose of God.

³⁰Ibid., p. 63.

Chapter 5

A COURSE FOR ADULTS ON THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF GOD

Fowler's steps in the Development of Faith

In order to develop a more mature concept of God in adults, it would seem necessary to assess at what stage of maturity the adults operate. Although Fowler's work is still in its earliest stages, he has attempted to formulate a developmental perspective on faith. Unlike Goldman's research, Fowler's extended into the adult years. Fowler, like Kohlberg and Piaget, assumed a structuralist stance. Each stage, while possessing its own "wholeness, grace and potential integrity,"¹ is a prelude to the following stage. Having achieved a higher stage did not mean for Fowler being "more serene, more genuine or more faithful" than persons in a lower stage.²

James Loder's judgement was that Fowler's work has value for cross cultural studies, but only limited useful-

¹James W. Fowler, III, "A Developmental Perspective on Faith," Religious Education, LXIX: 2 (March-April 1974), 214.

²Ibid.

ness in interpreting Christian aspects of theology.³ Fowler claimed that his emphasis was upon faith as knowing so that his work relates most clearly to the cognitive aspects of faith. Fowler warned against the inexperienced attempting to assign people to stages or stages to people. Despite these warnings, the writer will attempt to use Fowler's stages to estimate developmental stages with particular emphasis upon the understanding of God as the theological concept.

Fowler described six stages. The first stage he designated "Stage 0: Undifferentiated". In this stage Fowler linked Erikson's crises and the rudiments of ego strength under the rubric courage. For Fowler courage included "rudimentary but undifferentiated faith knowing."⁴ Fowler relied heavily upon both Erikson and Piaget for his description of Stage 0.

Stage I, he termed "Intuitive Projective." In this stage, knowing and feeling tend to be fused. The ego-centricity and pre-anthropomorphic aspects of faith relate the stage to Goldman's subreligious stage and Allport's description of the religion of childhood. Unfortunately, Fowler's illustrations concerning the deity

³James E. Loder, "Developmental Foundations for Christian Education," in Marvin J. Taylor (ed.) Foundations for Christian Education in an Era of Change, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976), p. 54.

⁴Fowler, p. 214.

are few, but the pre-anthropomorphic referred, in his writing, to God as like the air, being everywhere. The feeling aspect of faith was, for Fowler, reflected in the statement that imagery is highly personal.

In Stage II, called "Mythic, Literal," concepts are usually concrete. Fowler spoke of a tendency to be mono-mythic, that is, there is for some at this stage the inability to entertain conflicts between the myths and the authorities who confirm the myths. One way in which Fowler classified persons was by their ability or lack of ability to entertain the conflict between the myths and authorities who propagate them. The anthropomorphic form of the deity is the most popular. Thinking has become less magical and notions underlying the constructs (Fowler's term for "concepts") "lawful" and "regular" have developed. The basis of verification is in a trusted authority.

During the second stage, "relations to the deity seem to imply reciprocity." Fowler in his research found some adults who fitted into this stage. Generally, it described the stage Goldman called pre-religious. The mutual reciprocity is reminiscent of Kohlberg's stage 2 morality. "Reciprocity is a matter of 'you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours,' not of loyalty, gratitude or justice."⁵

⁵Lawrence Kohlberg, "The Child as Moral Philosopher," Psychology Today, II: 27 (December 1968), 26.

The next stage, Stage III, Fowler termed "Synthetic-Conventional." At this stage, Fowler maintained, persons become aware of the many-angled nature of experience and the differing value criteria which they create. Although there exists awareness of multiple meanings of symbols, there is lack of clear distinction made between them. Where there is conflict between authority in various areas, this is solved by either compartmentalization or "hierarchical subordination of all under one."⁶ Concepts underlying the idea of spiritual emerge and both deity and persons are seen as "spirit." It is at this stage that Fowler found that many American adults seem "best described." Kohlberg found in his research that many adults remain at this stage ⁴, or orientation towards authority. It is this stage that the ability to think abstractly has appeared and so concepts of the spiritual appear.

Fowler's Stage IV: "Individuating - Reflexive" results from the inability to achieve synthesis in Stage III. From this project's perspective, this stage is least helpful, because Stage IV persons are "likely to see most institutional religion as conventional"⁷ and be drawn to the exotic or novel in traditions which are different from their own.

⁶Fowler, p. 216.

⁷Ibid., p. 217.

However, the fact that Fowler maintained that the responsibility for world synthesis shifts clearly to one-self offers a clue for seeing this stage as transitional. This stage is marked by polarity and tension which would suggest, from Piaget's scheme, a period of moving from one stage to another, a stage of disequilibrium. At Stage V, "Polar-Dialectical", Fowler changed his terminology so that "the deity" became the "Universal". He gave no explanation for the change but it would appear that the deity is each person's concept of the deity while the Universal has significance for all persons. This stage most closely correlates to what Allport called the religion of maturity. Fowler called it "equilibrated faith knowing and faith being."

Faith-knowing involves, at this stage, a moral or volitional affirmation of that which is somewhat paradoxical: it affirms the beliefs, symbols and rituals of a community, while 'seeing through' them in a double sense. It sees the relativity, partiality, and time-boundedness of the tradition--the scandal of its particularity.⁸

The Universal is also the Ultimate which has imperatives. What these imperatives are is not disclosed but it is possible that they are moral imperatives.

The final and seventh stage, Stage VI, he designated "Universalizing". Only rare individuals reach this stage of participation in the Ultimate. The stage may only be

⁸Ibid.

reached as the result of development, discipline, and possibly, of spiritual genius.⁹ These three imply three different things, first, that the stage is the end result of developmental growth and therefore is a possibility for all, secondly, that it may be attained by some, by those who are willing to undertake the discipline, and thirdly, the attainment of this stage is for the spiritual genius and, therefore, only a possibility for a few. Those who reach this stage, are able to have fellowship with persons of other faith traditions, as well as with those who are at lower stages than themselves. They are no longer characterized by intolerance or prejudice.

On the one hand, the final stage suggests mysticism. The person who achieves faith in this way participates in the Ultimate. On the other hand, the communion with God results in practical "concern for what Jews and Christians call the Kingdom of God."¹⁰ Even though Fowler stated that no one stage is better than the other, this stage is characterized by persons whom he described as "more fully human than the rest of us."¹¹

Fowler's article is short. It is, therefore, difficult to assess with certainty the meaning of the various stages and the changes in terminology for God.

⁹Fowler spoke of this stage as the fruit of development, a term which suggests maturity.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 218.

¹¹Ibid., p. 217.

Unlike the final stage of growth in Erikson's developmental theory, Fowler's does not appear to be a real possibility for all persons. Further, although Fowler claimed to be dealing only with faith as knowing, he continually referred to faith as being. A person at Stage IV employs patterns that reveal "intellectual struggle with those tensions while maintaining behavioral patterns carried over from an earlier synthesis." At Stage VI, Fowler spoke of the practical concerns of the person who had reached this stage.¹² Grace, for Fowler, is the drawing into the source and center, the a priori reality of our hunger for "excellence of being."¹³

Fowler thus revealed his belief in the close relationship of knowing and action, but did not concentrate only on faith as knowing. The usefulness of his scheme may be limited. His use of the words for God, deity, the Ultimate, the Universal, Transcendent, the Other of Faith, suggest a philosophical understanding of the nature of God which differs from Whitehead's concept of God as both immanent and transcendent. Fowler claimed to be writing of "faith in faith" but he also wrote of faith in Transcendent source of being.¹⁴

¹²Ibid., pp. 217 and 218.

¹³Ibid., p. 219.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 218.

Assessing development

To a small group of adults in the West Covina United Methodist Church, the writer showed the segment of the film "What Do You Think"¹⁵ in which Dr. David Elkind asked children about their concepts of God. A discussion followed during which the adults recalled their own ideas and concepts about God in their childhood and then stated how these had changed.

In the group there was one member who had not been brought up in the church. For those who had, the general idea of God in childhood was partly fashioned by pictures of Jesus or biblical characters such as Moses, seen in Sunday School. For all, there was some degree of confusion between who God and who Jesus was. The lady who had been brought up outside the church said: "I thought Jesus and God were the same." God was either thought of as an old man or as an amorphous substance, like a cloud. He was all-powerful.

In relating how their concepts have changed, the group expressed their present concepts of God. The general conclusion was they differentiated between God and Jesus. As one lady said: "Just recently, I was 60 years old when

¹⁵"What Do You Think", film. (Philadelphia: Geneva Press, 1971).

I changed, I started studying about the Bible. I realized there is a big difference between God and Jesus."¹⁶ When asked what the difference is, she replied: "God is spiritual. That is, he is everywhere. He is, what would you call him, he is above man."

Her statement about age prompted another lady to state: "I was 53 years old before I had any inner experience of God. I was taken to church in a bassinet as soon as mother could get out of the house, but it didn't mean anything to me, in fact, the ideas about God were blocked out. I was trying to climb the tower of Cologne cathedral and got to a place where the kind of masonry changed. After I had gone up about a story and a half, the kind of stone changed and the rest of the tower was built of a different kind of stone. I was nearly at the top when I felt, I am just too old to make it to the top, so I sat down and I read about it. They said that the plans for that cathedral were laid out more than 600 years ago and they built it over a period and it sat unbuilt until no more stone was left in that quarry. When they resumed building they had to get a different kind of stone. Then the thought that a group of people could plan and that it took men of twenty generations before it was finally built to completion, I suddenly felt the transcendent spirit of

¹⁶The extract from the sessions are used with the participants' permission.

the years that went into the building of that cathedral. I really believed there is a God who transcends time and everything--otherwise why keep working until the building was completed."

In contrast, a younger lady who had been brought up in the church, expressed the way in which she had changed by stating: "I was about eight years old when I decided that God was all-powerful. I prayed to Him for something very specific that no one else knew about and it came about so I knew he answered prayers. I wanted a white horse to ride ... I went to visit my uncle. The week before my uncle had gotten a white horse. I didn't tell anyone but there was no doubt in my mind--but anyway--". When asked if her concept of God as all-powerful had changed, she replied: "I switched to freedom of choice. The power that God has allows us the freedom of choice. That takes a certain kind of power--a unique power. In essence, I like to think of this in dealing with other people."

In general there was a shift from God as an old man to God as spiritual. A man stated: "God is more of a spirit, he is everywhere." In this sense, the group, except for the lady who described God as all-powerful when she was eight, appeared to fit into Fowler's Stage III. However, there were also statements which reflected the embracing of tensions and incorporating them into "an equilibrated faith-knowing." An example of this would be in

the description of God as uniquely powerful but limited by his allowing freedom of choice. There were also examples of the reappropriation of the past and appreciation of the blockage to faith in early life, both of which suggest Stage V.

A difficulty in assessing stages arose as one member tried to explain her understanding of predestination. "I don't really know. I have never tried to express it in words. No, I don't think everything is predestined, just the length of one's life. When this statement was challenged by some members of the group, she replied, "Well, I like to believe that life is predestined because it is a comfort to me." Using Fowler's term, it appeared that the compartmentalization failed her, and she began to deal with the tension produced when beliefs are examined in the light of the reality of experience. As the rest of the group were dissatisfied with the statements she made, they lead her on towards a new stage. She could be described as being in transition, perhaps at Stage IV.

In summary, then, the members of the group were at various stages of development. All, it appeared, having outgrown the sub-religious and pre-religious stages of Goldman, were prepared to consider new concepts and ideas, but only a step at a time. If faith is an active form of knowing with a discernible structure, Fowler's stages can provide a launching pad for assessing stages. However, his

scheme needs expansion along the lines of Goldman's studies with children, so that the Christian educator may relate and test various aspects of the faith against the stage of development.

Outline of a Course for Adults

The following is a plan for a six weeks' course on the nature and purpose of God. The text for the course is Miller's chapter "Who is God?" from his book This We Can Believe. Each session lasts one hour.

Session One. Introduction to the course.

Segment from the film What Do You Think. (Concepts of God)

Childhood recall. What concepts of God were present in childhood.

Present Concepts.

Introduce text and assign readings.

Session Two.

Impressions from the reading.

Presentation and discussion of Persuasive Power versus Coercive Power.

Presentation of Whitehead's, Cobb's and Griffin's views. Discussion on the relevance to our lives with respect to

- a. Freedom of choice and
- b. evil in the world.

List questions from chapter of text.

Session Three.

Using overhead projector demonstrate the distinction between theism, pantheism, and panentheism.

Role play. Three people assume the position of a theist, a pantheist and a panentheist and present how each would address God in prayer.

Presentation of Whitehead's, Cobb's and Griffin's views of the dipolar nature of God.

Discussion on relevance of the dipolar nature for group.

Session Four.

Discussion on Miller's use of the term "Overbeliefs." Buzz groups.

Make own list of overbeliefs.

Discuss Miller's use of models and names. Compile list which is most meaningful to group.

Session Five.

Discussion on the consequent nature of God, God as judge and God as

merciful.

Discuss Miller's emphasis upon the church and community.

Case Studies. (See Appendix)

Discussion on reasons for including section on church in Miller's chapter.

Session Six.

The Fatherhood of God. Discussion on Miller's idea about how Jesus related to Joseph.

The Christian God. Discuss the significance of this section in Miller's chapter.

Evaluation. (See Below)

The Adult Learner

Kidd affirmed that adults can learn! Although they can learn, few, if any, "adults have ever approached their potential achievement in learning" and the reason has little to do with the age of the learner. "The stoutest shackles are self imposed."¹⁷

If certain conditions are met, compensation for decrease in acuity of vision and hearing, as well as allowing time for the learning process, adults can learn

¹⁷J. R. Kidd, How Adults Learn (New York: Associated Press, 1959), p. 9.

effectively. For Kidd, it was important to remember that "learning is something that happens to a person, it is an individual thing." So for him, the most important task in learning for adults is the development of a "self that can deal with reality."¹⁸ However, the group remained important, for the self is never isolated. Often individuality is best realized in a supportive group atmosphere.

Adults have the capacity to learn but may lack the motivation. Kidd stated that "the aspect of motivation is both significant and central"¹⁹ to the adult learning situation. Kidd distinguished between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation was related to money and time. The latter may play a part in Christian education. However, the motivation is often intrinsic. The gains come from the experience of learning and the enjoyment of the process. There may be a desire to know more about the faith, to be able to relate one's faith to one's life work, and the joy of participation in the group learning experience. Adults have a wealth of individual and varied experiences to bring to the learning situation.

The Adult Teacher

In adulthood, self-learning assumes greater importance than in childhood. Today teachers often encourage self-motivated learning in children while continuing to

¹⁸Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 38.

assert pressure on the children to meet certain behavioral objectives. Even in adulthood, the teacher or leader has a role.

In Verner and Booth's book on adult education, the authors were concerned with non-church related adult education. They dealt with professional and non-professional leadership. They pointed out that teachers often come from the parent institution and hence carry on²⁰ the tradition of that institution. The role of adult educator they divide into two, the administrative and the instructional role. The former are concerned with determining program areas, selecting appropriate methods, managing the operation for the institution, and evaluating the program's effectiveness. In the latter role as instructor, the adult educator is concerned with sequential ordering of the content,²¹ the selection of specific techniques, the management of the learning situation, and the measurement of achievement. In the church, the administrative function may be performed by the Adult Council or the Work Area in Education, while the adult teacher performs the instructor's role.

Kidd, in his chapter entitled "The Teacher - Learning Transaction"²² was concerned to demonstrate that "teacher" is an inappropriate term. We need a word to

²⁰Coolie Verner and Alan Booth, Adult Education (Washington: Center for Applied Research in Education, 1964), p. 32.

²¹Ibid., p. 38.

²²Kidd, p. 270 ff.

express "he or she who assists-learning-to happen." Other terms have been tried, such as facilitator, leader, counselor, and change-agent. Kidd's concern was to remind his readers that teachers have many roles and there is no one way to teach. There can be no real teaching without some-one learning.

Some of the aspects of teaching are presenting information, raising relevant questions, clarifying difficulties, finding relationships or helping others to, reflecting feelings, and expressing agreement or support. As a person, the teacher must know something well and be prepared to be a learner him or herself. It was Whitehead who when speaking of the university wrote:

This atmosphere of excitement arising from imaginative consideration transforms knowledge. A fact is no longer a bare fact; it is invested with all its possibilities. It is no longer a burden on the memory, it is as energizing as the poet of our dreams, and as the architect of our purposes.²³

Whitehead warned about passing on "inert ideas", ideas that no longer aroused the imagination nor had usefulness for daily living.

Kidd aired another concern. As change-agent, the adult educator, is faced with the question of how to bring about change. The question involves the ethical issues of manipulation, indoctrination and the means of providing the

²³Alfred North Whitehead, Aims of Education (New York: Free Press, 1967), p. 93.

milieu for change. In a church setting, the aim is to develop the full potentiality of each person. Consequently, manipulation and indoctrination which disregard the integrity of the learner are not acceptable means of inducing change. Kidd showed that the teacher "who accepts him or herself, with some understanding of his or her will to dominate (will be)...less likely to manipulate" others.²⁴

Kidd concluded his chapter by using illustrations. One which relates well to Christian education is the illustration of illumination. The opening up of the dark patches, Kidd explained, was a constant theme of Bishop Gruntvig, the founder of the Dutch folk high schools. The way a teacher expresses his or her own "use of life" is by illuminating the dark patches and helping others grow.²⁵

Choice of Techniques and Methods

De S. Brunner distinguished between the terms "methods" and "techniques." The term "methods" are the relationships between the learner, the knowledge and the institution. The methods would include classes, workshops, conventions and so on. The term "techniques" refers to the relationships between the learner and the material to be diffused. The relationship is established by the teacher

²⁴Kidd, p. 315.

²⁵Ibid., p. 316.

within the context of the method. The distinction could prove helpful in maintaining the relations between the work area in education and the adult educator. The adult educator decides what techniques best suit the method designated by the work area.

Bergevin²⁶ divided his techniques into sub-techniques which are less complex and function for a shorter time, for example buzz groups, and educational aids such as slides and films. Bergevin was primarily interested in the planning process. Harold Minor²⁷ used a different grouping. The book spoke of using personal creativity, printed resources, and audio and visual tools, and listed procedures for group involvement. Minor's stated purpose for each procedure and technique was to help people develop their creative potential.

For the course on developing a more mature understanding of the concept of God, a variety of techniques had been chosen. The techniques reflect the type of learning which was desired.

The class was a small one, allowing for interaction. As unfamiliar material was presented, the students were informed of additional readings as well as the rele-

²⁶Paul Bergevin, Dwight Morris, and Robert M. Smith, Adult Education Procedures, (Greenwich, CT: Seabury Press, 1963), pp. 142 ff.

²⁷Harold D. Minor (ed.) Creative Procedures for Adult Groups (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), pp. 7 ff.

vant passage in the assigned text. Using flip charts and the overhead projector, new concepts were presented and key ideas recorded. A summary of the discussion was kept and each session tape recorded.

A segment of the film was used to introduce the idea of cognitive development as well as to stimulate discussion and childhood recall. Buzz sessions were used to elicit lists of ideas from the group. Role playing and case studies were used to help the adult learner, recognize the underlying assumptions which influence the ways faith is expressed. Much time was spent in class discussion, during which obscure points were clarified and the group facilitated the process of learning. Class discussion time provided the opportunity for each member to express his or her point of view and to have it heard. The course ended with an evaluation to aid in reinforcing learning and to highlight areas of the study.

The techniques used were regarded as tools. The aim was to encourage development. The techniques were used, first, to help present new material in various and stimulating ways, and secondly, to promote discussion which would enable the adult learners to have the opportunity to express their own ideas concerning God in a supportive group setting. The group could facilitate movement to a higher stage of development.

Evaluation

There are a variety of perspectives on the value of assessment in Christian education. Burgess²⁸ has studied various facets of Christian education from four approaches, the traditional theological approach, the social cultural approach, the contemporary theological approach, and the social science approach.

For the traditional theological approach, which meant the authoritative teaching of the message of salvation, evaluation played little part. As a result of the approach, the teacher and content are evaluated rather than the change in students. It is recognized that the change in students may be a delayed one.²⁹

Because of the pragmatic nature of the social cultural approach, evaluation assumes greater importance. The evaluation is based upon observable changes in the student's life as well as upon learned facts.³⁰

The third approach, the contemporary theological approach, is best exemplified by Randolph Crump Miller. Such an approach aims, among other things to establish individuals in a right relationship with God in the fellow-

²⁸Harold William Burgess, An Invitation to Religious Education (Mishawaka, IN: Religious Education Press, 1975).

²⁹Ibid., p. 51.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 84 ff.

ship of the church and to educate people for intelligent Christian living. For such an approach, any evaluation of program or student progress must be compared with theological understandings.³¹

The social science approach is basically a behavioral approach. Religious education aims to facilitate specified "religiously targeted behaviors."³² Such behaviors are capable of being measured and according to this theory should be. Evaluation is the final end of teaching from such an approach.³³

Both the type and feasibility of evaluation of a course correlates closely to the objectives of the course. The theological and educational stance of the teacher will also affect the way the evaluation is approached and utilized.

Evaluation for the Course of Study

As the course aimed to produce a more mature understanding of the nature and purpose of God, the evaluation focused on this aspect of the study. To encourage all the students to express their feelings about the course, questions were asked to ascertain the satisfactions and dissatisfactions with the study.

³¹Ibid., p. 120.

³²Ibid., p. 127.

³³Ibid., pp. 158 ff.

1. What insights have you gained from this course about the nature and purpose of God?
2. What significance has this new insight for you?
3. What did you consider the most satisfactory part of the study?
4. What did you consider the most unsatisfactory part of the study?
5. What else would you like to have studied or done?

In discussion following the evaluation, the learners could provide some clues as to whether their new understandings had led to a new stage or to a transition from one to another.

The aim of the course was not to produce specific behavioral changes but rather cognitive changes. Other changes could follow. From an educational point of view, the aim of the course was both to present some new understandings as well as to facilitate expression of beliefs. It was hoped to formulate new beliefs or new ways of expressing beliefs which would relate to a view of reality that comes from daily observation and contacts with other people.

The evaluation was used to evoke discussion and consolidate learnings. It could also be used for planning further courses of study for adults.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

Development of Maturity

"Mature belief...grows painfully out of the alternating doubts and affirmations that characterize productive thinking."¹ Allport's conclusion suggests three things. First, that the process of developing maturity is not easy. Secondly, the implication contained in the statement is that the process may be a lengthy one. Thirdly, that the process is one which is similar to all productive thinking.

First, then, the development of a more mature concept of God is not an easy task. The comprehensive, integrated, and differentiated outlook which characterizes the religion of maturity must also characterize the mature concept of God. Whitehead's concept of God proved to be in accord with Allport's criteria to a marked degree. Cobb and Griffin were concerned with cognitive aspects of the faith rather than emotive ones. Both are therefore rationalistic and their approach appeals to many well educated adults and accords with their concept of reality. In the course taught, the adults who attended were college

¹Gordon W. Allport, The Individual and His Religion (New York: Macmillan, 1950), p. 122.

graduates, some of whom held responsible positions of leadership. They were concerned with relating their faith in God to the daily tasks they faced.

Each adult revealed that he or she was aware of the interaction between doubts and affirmations. Some were more in the doubting frame of mind. "How can God be loving and allow thousands of people to die of hunger each day?" Others were in the affirming frame of mind. "When we really believe, God helps us." There appeared to be a desire to promote the growth of others, a willingness to interact in the group, and to probe for underlying assumptions.

The adults who present themselves for adult education are those who are highly motivated and who desire to test their beliefs. They are already in the process of growth in the area of religious development, and rather than being in Fowler's lower stages of development tend to be in higher, and could be said to be the more mature adults. These observations apply specifically to adults who attend Bible courses and theological studies that emphasize one's innate ability to reason and develop cognitively.

Secondly, the element of time plays an important part. Developing a more mature concept of God would probably take more time than is allowed in a six weeks' course. Further, other studies and sermons on the subject

could reinforce learnings over a period of time. There would need to be some follow-up study on the subject.

The time allowed for the study was too short for evaluating much change. One man collected references to God from the morning sermon and prayers to ascertain what the pastor conveyed concerning the nature and purpose of God. The group closely examined the ways in which they addressed God in prayer, and how the invocation related to the content of the prayer.

In one sense, the time allowed was sufficient. The group found the subject matter new and challenging and, consequently, were prepared to move on to a different subject. In another sense, the time allowed was too short. It was insufficient for exploring all the new ideas presented and for pursuing other interests such as the relationship between the nature and purpose of God and the present hunger crisis.

Thirdly, Allport stated that the struggle with belief is like that of all productive thinking. He thus emphasized the cognitive aspect of belief. Belief in God, the group acknowledged, was the result of Sunday School learning, readjustments because of the ways in which human freedom was viewed, and of study both of the Bible and related subjects. The group evidenced a desire to know more. The concept of God as persuasive power had great appeal, rather more to the group than to the leader.

The group accepted the term persuasive as a positive force which accorded well with their vision of reality.

There was general recognition that new light was thrown upon God's nature and purpose but there was no evidence of growth in relation to Fowler's stages of religious development. The fact that there was a desire to hold faith tentatively, while continuing to live by it, suggested maturity of religious sentiment.

The above statements refer to all members of the class except one. He continually used expressions such as the "hands of God" and "the throne of grace." One lady attempted to help him, as she expressed it, "de-program" the expressions. While a faithful member of the group, he seldom spoke to the subject.

On the whole, the study was productive. It stimulated discussion, and enabled the members to express their beliefs about God. Comments from other members helped to clarify ideas and to examine underlying assumptions. One lady said: "I am open to any new ideas about God and the Bible. I listen to everyone, then I think about them. I sort them out in my own mind and come up with what I believe."

Use for Christian Education

At least a small number of adults in the church, are prepared for serious study of serious subjects at

depth. They seek for a better relationship with God, with others and with the world in which they live. They require the "meat" of the Gospel rather than "milk." They ask philosophical and theological questions and are prepared to study to find answers. Further, they wait for illumination on certain topics and anticipate assistance from theologically trained personnel. Such adults appreciate an intellectual challenge as long as the difficult subject matter is not entirely impossible.

The type of study most suited to adults depends on factors outside the learning situation. The mobility of adults, family commitments and other reasons draw them from the study group. A nucleus only attend continuously for even the shortest series. The topic chosen required continuity of attendance. The six weeks' span covered a time when one member took an overseas trip and during the time there was one public holiday weekend. While militating against the effectiveness of the study, it illustrated the difficulties inherent in planning a course of study which depended on previous meetings of the group. A series of studies in which each is self-contained but with a thread of continuity could prove more practical.

The experience established that a supportive group can facilitate the growth of the individual members. New ideas were shared and assessed. Many relevant illustrations appeared during the course of study.

Value for the Writer

From the writer's perspective, the project has proved to be an interesting one. The search for an understanding of the nature and purpose of God led from Whitehead's concept of God to a study of process theologians development of the concept. This elicited an inquiry into previously held beliefs and the reasons for these beliefs. While not entirely convinced that process theologians have all the answers to the search, it appears that the tentativeness of propositional statements about God allows for more thought about some of the difficulties experienced in expressing one's faith in God.

Further, an interest in the education for all ages has deepened. Adult education in the church poses problems. Some of these are the range of interests, great variety in cognitive development and stages of religious development. The other side of the coin is that teaching adults has rewards as one witnesses the way in which members of the group gain confidence in expression and in supporting each other.

In Australia, the writer's birthplace, the church has more marks of a minority church. In a materialistic, secularistic society which is often antagonistic to the church, the understanding of God as expressed in the theologies of Cobb and Griffin may have greater appeal than

traditional expressions.

The attempt to integrate the understandings gained from theology and Christian Education proved beneficial. The challenge came in interpreting what had been learned in theology classes in the seminary to a group of adults in the local church setting.

The concept of maturity in religious understanding as one that is not a state reached but rather a realization of full potential at each stage of adulthood, highlights the continuing need to present to adults seeking after an understanding of God, opportunities to discuss new theological insights. Christian education is a life-long process.

APPENDIX

EXTRACTS FOR STUDY

If the churches are to participate in the church, they must be creatively transformed through their openness to Christ. This means that they must accept ideas and practices against which they have been protecting themselves. But it does not mean that they should accept uncritically what is foreign to their traditions, Christ does not call us to Kulturprotestantismus! On the contrary, creative transformation for the Christian community involves the heightening of criticism both of itself and of that which it finds outside itself. It involves the critical appropriation of that which it discerns as the work of Christ in the world, at the price of whatever inner changes are thereby entailed. Such work is in fact now going on with impressive results. The catholic spirit is being released from its bondage in both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.¹

The interrelation between communion with Christ and the communion of Christians with one another describes the inmost essence of the church. But this hall-mark is open to misinterpretation in the sense of an exclusively private, inner devotionalism, withdrawn from the world. It is open

¹John B. Cobb, Jr. and David Ray Griffin, Process Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), p. 131.

to this misinterpretation as long as we ignore the horizon to which Jesus' message and ministry was related, and to which consequently Christ's communion of believers must also be related if it is really to be in communion with Jesus. This horizon is the horizon of the future of God, the expectation of God's coming kingdom. With this the original sense of the word church (ekklesia) emerges, and its relationship to the Old Testament idea of the community chosen by God, to whom the promises of God apply (I Kings 8:55). The early church description of itself as ekklesia is an expression of its understanding of itself as the heir of the promises to Israel. The church knew itself to be God's community of the end-time. As such the ground of its existence lies in the expectation of God's final coming, in the proclamation of his coming rule and its dawn with Jesus as his Messiah. What the church means as communion with Christ and participation in the holy can only be properly described in this context.²

²Wolfhart Pannenberg, The Apostles' Creed (London: SCM Press, 1972), p. 152.

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